

CHAPTER 9

TRAVELING WITH PETS

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GENERAL INFORMATION

Before deciding to take your pet overseas, check to be certain that your new post welcomes animals. Current information regarding post-specific pet entry requirements can be found in the OBC Information Center in the TM2s or welcome cables. OBC's websites contain various resource lists that pertain to traveling with pets. These include: *Shipping of Pets Checklist* (with kennels and pet transportation specialists), a *Pet Chart*, with general quarantine restrictions and entry requirements, and *Airline Policy Information*.

Call the appropriate embassy in Washington to confirm the entry and quarantine requirements. Some embassies provide forms printed in English and the host language for your veterinarian to complete. Some countries do not permit importation or have *long* requirements for quarantine for which you are expected to pay.

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

If you decide to take your pet, make the necessary arrangements directly with the airlines well in advance. Government travel offices will not handle pet reservations. Checking each airline's current pet transport regulations is crucial. They vary considerably. Shipping a pet in summer months, except through a licensed commercial shipper, is increasingly difficult. Some airlines have indicated they will maintain these same strict regulations during the non-summer months.

Most airlines will permit one animal per flight in the coach and first-class sections. Make reservations early. The pet must be small enough to fit in a container that slides under your seat. Check requirements for and availability of acceptable containers from the airline you are using.

If you cannot book cabin space for your pet, there are three other methods of shipping:

1. A reservation to travel with you as baggage can be made. A crated animal can fly either as excess baggage (some airlines no longer offer this option) on the same plane with you, or as airfreight. If your pet is traveling with you, it will be checked at the same time as your other baggage. Some airlines no longer offer this option.
2. You can personally book your pet on a separate plane. In this case, you will be charged the cargo rate, which is considerably more than excess baggage. (Some of the airlines no longer offer you this option.)
3. You can have your pet shipped through a licensed commercial shipper. In this case, you will be charged the cargo rate *plus* the shipper's fee. Several airlines require this method unless your pet is small enough to fit in-cabin.

Note: As a rule, *animals 100 lbs. or larger* will be charged as *cargo* even if they travel on the plane with you. It is important to check with the airline if your pet is close to that weight.

Shipping containers must be made of sturdy wood or reinforced plastic. Acceptable crates often are sold by airlines as a service to their passengers. Extremely large animals may require specially constructed shipping crates and/or may have to be shipped in a cargo plane since some cargo openings cannot accept unusually large crates. Carrying cases suitable for use as "under the seat" baggage are not acceptable as shipping containers. Your crate should have a solid leak-proof bottom lined with absorbent material. At least 20 to 30 percent of the crate's upper surfaces should be ventilated. A batten or other protrusion on the container will prevent it from being placed flat against another surface, which would limit its air flow. It should be large enough to permit the animal to stand and turn around. (Too much space should be avoided as rough weather can create a battering effect on the animal). A water dish should be fastened to the crate so it cannot spill and so that the animal can be watered without the crate being opened. It should be conveniently located so that an attendant can provide water at stopovers without being bitten. A clothesline leash and cloth bag of food can be attached to the crate along with care and feeding instructions. Attention given to pets at stopovers varies and is sometimes nonexistent. Some flight attendants will feed and water animals; others will only open the baggage compartment door for ventilation.

The crates are placed in the hold of the plane in a pressurized compartment where temperatures should be similar to that of the passenger compartments. The compartments are airtight, but the number of pets that can be shipped on a single flight is limited. If possible, the crate is put near a door so that the animal can get some fresh air whenever a stopover is made. Space should be left around each crate and the container secured with a net to prevent bouncing. Try to check these details before boarding your flight.

HEALTH CERTIFICATION

The certification requirements vary from country to country. Some countries require certification of the Veterinarian's Examination Statement. Check with the embassy to determine what the exact requirements are before making an appointment with a veterinarian. It is also wise to check the airline carrier that you will be using for your pet. There is an endorsement fee by the USDA of \$22 per certificate for cats and dogs. If your pet was examined in the Washington, D.C., area, mail your pet's health record to:

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA-APHIS)
Veterinary Services
1598 Whitehall Rd., Suite #A
Annapolis, MD 21401
410-349-9643 or 301-261-8072

If the veterinarian is accredited in Virginia, mail to:

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA-APHIS)
Veterinary Services
Washington Building, Suite 600
1100 Bank Street
Richmond, VA 23219
804-771-2774

The USDA-APHIS web site is <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/travel>

Note: Some veterinarians will take care of the certification for you. Ask before mailing examination statements yourself. If you do mail or Federal Express your veterinary certificate, include a prepaid self-addressed stamped envelope, or a Federal Express envelope.

Some countries may also require authentication of certificates. If your country of assignment requires them, go first to the following office:

Office of Authentication
Department of State
518 23rd Street NW
(Columbia Plaza, State Annex 1)
Washington, DC 20520
202-647-5002

The timetable for obtaining examination statements and certifications can be very tight. Plan ahead carefully to be sure all paperwork is complete before travel. For more information, visit the Overseas Briefing Center to review suggestions made in the handout "Shipping of Pets Checklist."

RECOMMENDATIONS ON SHIPPING AN ANIMAL INCLUDE:

- (1) Let your pet become accustomed to the crate before shipment, by having practice sessions that build in time of confinement.
- (2) Include a familiar toy or something with your scent on it.
- (3) Put identification tags that include an emergency phone number around your pet's neck, using a plastic, breakaway collar.
- (4) Feed your pet(s) a light meal about six hours before shipping. *No water* within two hours, unless the weather is *very hot*. Check with your veterinarian for requirements for your pet. Do *not* tranquilize the animal.
- (5) Special information placed on the crate should include: flight route, shipping destination, whether the animal has been sedated, when last fed and watered, and the pet's description, and a telephone contact number. You might want to list this information in other languages, depending on the countries transited.
- (6) Check with the agent who meets the flight about your pet's progress when you are changing planes. Have your airway bill number readily available when doing this.
- (7) Allow plenty of time between connecting flights to be sure your animal is transferred to your flight if traveling with you.
- (8) If there is a delay, the airline will kennel the pets, when kennels are available. State on your airway bill that your animal is to be taken to the animal port if there is a delay or stopover, if you desire this service. There are daily and half-day rates for the service; normal rates per day (or part of a day) are: \$11 for cats, \$15-\$25 (by size) for dogs, \$15 (per cage) for birds, and more for larger animals.
- (9) Arrange to have your pet picked up immediately on arrival. Airline facilities for pets may be limited or nonexistent.
- (10) Carry a photograph of your pet for emergency identification purposes.

RESOURCES

The Overseas Briefing Center can provide names of several Washington area pet kennels and delivery services.

Overseas Briefing Center (M/FSI/TC/OBC)

Post Information Center

Room E 2126

4000 Arlington Boulevard

Arlington, Virginia

Tel: 703-302-7277

Hours: 8:15 a.m.-5:00 p.m. weekdays.

Select Saturdays and Wednesday evenings.

Website: <http://www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc>

E-mail: FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov